



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

AUG 10 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DIRECTOR, COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM  
EVALUATION  
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES  
DIRECTORS OF THE DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities in the Department of Defense (DoD)

Language, regional and cultural skills are enduring warfighting competencies that are critical to mission readiness in today's dynamic global environment. Our forces must have the ability to effectively communicate with and understand the cultures of coalition forces, international partners, and local populations. DoD has made progress in establishing a foundation for these capabilities, but we need to do more to meet current and future demands.

The Department must establish and execute policies and procedures that show we value these skills. As a minimum, both military and civilian personnel should have cross-cultural training to successfully work in DoD's richly diverse organization and to better understand the global environment in which we operate. Commanders must ensure that deploying units, leaders, and staffs receive the language and culture training that is commensurate with their missions and responsibilities. We must also increase and sustain the foreign language proficiency of our language and regional professionals if we are to be able to understand and plan for future missions. Finally, we must build relevant career models for officer and enlisted personnel that place a high value on language, regional and culture expertise to increase DoD's capacity to support global missions.

In order to move forward to meet the challenges of building and sustaining these skills, I have asked the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to develop a way ahead. I expect your full support as we proceed in building and institutionalizing these vital skills in our Force.



OSD 09206-11

